



Guidance for managing complaints

**The Parochial Church Council of St John's Southbourne
with West Thorney**

Churchwardens
wardens@stjohnssouthbourne.com

Our Church recognises that our church members and all those who visit our church or any of our church activities have the right to expect high quality services. However, we recognise that from time to time there may be occasions when users of our services feel that the quality or level of service provided falls short of what they could reasonably expect.

We greatly value your continued goodwill and we would expect to resolve any day to day difficulties or complaints informally and as quickly as possible. In the first instance we would expect you to raise any complaint directly with the church member concerned.

If all that we do does not meet expected standards, then you have the right to complain.

A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about an action, or lack of action by a person acting on behalf of the church, or about the policies and procedures of the church.

We will consider any complaint using the procedures set out below.

It is important that we give all persons the ability and information with which to complain. They should determine the seriousness of the complaint, which could be about:

- conduct of our clergy and/or some or all members of our church,
- the standard or sort of service we provide,
- discrimination,
- provision of inaccurate information, or
- poor administration including delays in responding to enquiries.

What is the purpose of the policy?

- To protect the interests of all church users and visitors
- To improve the quality of services we provide by responding to the views and needs of people affected
- To enable church users and visitors to propose improvements to our ways of working
- To protect our minister and church members
- To provide a means of monitoring our performance.

The clergy and all church members should be familiar with the process.

Complaints against clergy should be passed to the archdeacon or the bishop.

Informal Procedure

How is a complaint dealt with?

The aim always, when responding to complaints and grievances, is to enable them to be resolved informally, speedily and fairly by discussion, problem solving, mediation and negotiation.

- The person making the complaint should in the first instance speak to the person(s) deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction or disquiet, and the issue will hopefully be resolved in this way.
- If they receive no satisfactory response, they should ask to see a churchwarden.
- If the complaint cannot be dealt with immediately, we should give a written response within 5 working days.
- If the complainant is still not satisfied, they have the right to appeal.
- They should write to the Chair of the PCC, requesting a meeting at a mutually convenient time and place.
- The appeal committee will be made up of the Chair and the two churchwardens.
- We will provide a written response within 10 working days of that meeting.

It is important that we give the complainant any help they need including

- Assistance in writing the formal complaint
- The opportunity to be accompanied by a friend, adviser or advocate
- Ease of access to any meeting. In some circumstances it may be possible to meet at the complainant's home (lack of transport, disability, mobility, etc)

All complaints should be reported to the Churchwardens and recorded in the appropriate file which is kept in the church. Details should include the nature of the complaint and the date received, the process followed and the action taken and the outcomes including further follow-up.

If a complaint or grievance relates to or includes an allegation that a child or adult who may be vulnerable has been harmed or is at risk of harm, or that an adult or another child may have caused harm to a child or adult who may be vulnerable, it must be responded to through the Diocesan and Charity Commission procedures for handling allegations of abuse.

If the complaint or grievance does not concern a child or adult who may be vulnerable, and the person bringing it is not satisfied with the outcome at the problem-solving stage, s/he may then invoke this further and formal procedure.

The more formal procedure outlined below is intended for use by members and other users of our services, where informal communication has not resolved the problem.

Formal Procedure

This is what you should do:

The complaint should be made either in person, or by telephone, letter or email to the *Incumbent (Vicar)* or a *Churchwarden*, who will acknowledge, in writing within ten working days, the receipt of any complaint. If the complaint is about *the Incumbent and Church Wardens* the complaint should be addressed to the Chair (marked '*confidential*'). At this, and any subsequent stage, the complainant may be accompanied or supported by a friend, but not a legal representative.

This is what the PCC will do:

The Chair and one churchwarden will investigate the circumstances leading to the complaint and will communicate the results of the investigation to the complainant within a reasonable time – normally within 20 working days of the complaint being received. Both sides will have the opportunity to submit information to the Chair, and to receive the details of the complaint (or response). If the complaint relates to the Incumbent or the Churchwarden, suitable members of the PCC can be asked to undertake the complaint review process by the Chair of the PCC. If the complaint is found to be justified, the Chair will agree any necessary further action and communicate this with the complainant.

Both the complainant, and those whose actions have been complained about, will have the right – if dissatisfied with the results of the enquiry – to put their case, in writing, to an appeal panel of two PCC members, which will include at least one Churchwarden.

If the appeal is found to be justified, the appeal panel will agree any necessary further action and communicate this with the complainant. The decision of the appeal panel is final and no further appeal is possible.

The Chair will keep the PCC informed of the number and nature of complaints, and the outcomes. S/he will report to the PCC on this at least annually.

Initial Contact

If you have a complaint, contact:

The Chair of PCC

The Parish Office

St John's Church Centre

Stein Road,

Southbourne, Emsworth

PO10 8LB

Please also let us know if you are happy with St John's services.

When your complaint cannot be resolved

Where we have exhausted all avenues and the complainant is still dissatisfied, contact the Charity Commission as follows:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

**PCC of St John's with West Thorney
Complaints Record Form**

Name of complainant:

Address:

Telephone number:

Nature of complaint:

Date received:

Action taken:

Outcome:

Is it resolved?

Follow-up needed?

Date followed up